

BUILDERS of GOD'S KINGDOM

THE HISTORY ^{OF} ~~THE~~ CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SOUTH DAKOTA



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YANKTON, SOUTH DAKOTA, 57078

Sponsored by the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D.

1979

the consequences of its neglect of duty. Private schools, larger and smaller, differing widely in dogmatic teaching, but identical in ethics and patriotism, would again spring up and multiply all over the land, and education would again be on a proper and safe basis. The children, or most of them, would be christianized as well as Americanized.⁵⁵

One can see that the Reverend Geer visualized a double school system in the land. This same principle activated early settlers in Dakota.

Public elementary schools followed quickly on the heels of private schools opened in claim shanties. Most Protestants were content to let the Territory shoulder the financial burden of elementary education. There were some exceptions. Lutheran and Episcopalian, and probably some other, elementary schools were found. Catholic communities definitely wanted a religion-oriented education for their children.

Pastoral Letters, which are official messages issued to the clergy and the faithful of the United States by the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church, stressed the establishment of parish schools. In the Letter of 1843, church members were cautioned that efforts were being made "to poison the fountains of public education by giving it a sectarian hue, and accustoming children to the use of a version of the Bible under sectarian bias, and placing in their hands books of various kinds replete with offensive and dangerous matters."⁵⁶

This concern to foster and guard the Catholic faith in their children was voiced more urgently in the Pastoral of 1884. It pointed out that the three great educational agencies are the home, the church and the school:

These mould men and shape society. Therefore, each of them, to do its part well, must foster religion. . . Childhood and youth are the periods of life when character ought especially to be subjected to religious influences. . . It cannot be desirable or advantageous that religion should be excluded from the school.⁵⁷

Facing the fact of a pluralistic religious situation in America, the Hierarchy ordered that Catholic schools be multiplied:

No parish is complete till it has schools adequate to the needs of its children.⁵⁸

But this was to be done not in a spirit of narrow "sectarianism":

. . . this is an honest and logical endeavor to preserve Christian truth and morality among the people by fostering religion in the young. Nor is it antagonism to the State; on the contrary, it is an honest endeavor to give to the State better citizens, by making them better Christians. The friends of Christian education do not condemn the State for not imparting religious instruction in the public

schools as they are now organized, because they well know it does not lie within the province of the State to teach religion. They simply follow their conscience by sending their children to denominational schools, where religion can have its rightful place and influence.⁵⁹

In this work, Catholic schools will be treated in connection with the respective parishes. It is very apparent that during the early period of Dakota history, Catholics, in contrast to their Christian counterparts, did not aspire to founding secondary schools or colleges. The explanation for this seeming apathy may be the type of people and the poverty on the frontier. Except for priests, very few of the Catholic immigrants had received a higher education; consequently, they did not ambition one for their children. They were rural people. In contrast, many Protestants came to Dakota as government officials, land prospectors and economic leaders. They had transferred from older states and knew the English language and the United States system of government. These men naturally became leaders in the different settlements. Clergymen had with them their families and were determined to give their children the educational opportunities they themselves had enjoyed. Ministers were in the forefront promoting the public school system. Many of them served as county superintendents, teachers or sat on territorial boards. Several served in the Territorial Assembly. These are among the first: the Reverend J. J. McIntire, territorial Superintendent of Schools in 1875;⁶⁰ the Reverend Joseph Ward, president of Yankton's first school board and also on the first board of the State Hospital.⁶¹ Two of the first county superintendents of schools were ministers; the Reverend Stewart Sheldon prepared the questions for the first teachers examination in Dakota Territory in 1868.⁶²

The omnipresence of Protestant clergymen serving in these and other capacities intensified the belief among Catholic immigrants that the government and the public schools were Protestant dominated. Consequently, they were reluctant to entrust their children to a school where proselytizing might occur. Because of this fear, the erection of parish schools was second only to that of building a house of worship. Protestants, on the other hand, entrusted their children to the public schools, but ambioned denominational secondary schools and colleges for the further education of their children and preparation for the ministry.

55. NYFJ, Oct. 10, 1903.

56. Guilday, *Pastorals*, p. 152.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 245 f.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

59. *Ibid.*

60. P & D, Nov. 1, 1875.

61. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1874.

62. Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 25 f.

According to the provisions of the assembly of Dakota Territory, in December, 1882, there was to be, in the projected university, no religious test for the admission of students, for the engagement of professors and for other employees; sectarian instruction was forbidden.⁷⁶ With ministers in positions of authority, an indirect religious influence in regulations was to be expected. Take, for instance, the rule that all students were to attend chapel services "where brief and simple religious exercises" were held;⁷⁷ that indulgence in intoxicating liquor and frequenting places of public resort were forbidden; and calls of young men on young women were allowed only by special permission.⁷⁸ By legislative enactment, 1885, no intoxicating liquors could be sold and no billiard saloons or "questionable resorts" were permitted within three miles of the University grounds.⁷⁹ In his commencement address, 1886, President Herrick stressed that the religious element was basic in education and inferred that without it, the state could, in the long run, expect only to perish.⁸⁰

Other state schools followed. The State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts was founded by an act of the 1881 legislature. It was "to be at Brookings. . . provided that a tract of land of not less than 80 acres be secured and donated to the Territory of Dakota." Funds were voted in 1883 for the first building and "Central" was opened on September 24, 1884. Later, land grants helped to establish this, the first "land grant college" in Dakota.⁸¹

The provision for a School of Mines in Rapid City was conditioned also by a requirement that the city of Rapid City give "a good and sufficient deed in fee simple to the Territory of Dakota for a tract of land not less than five acres in extent, within, or adjacent to the city limits."⁸² The city complied and the first building was dedicated, August 19, 1885.⁸³

The legislature of 1881 showed predilection for normal schools, authorizing five institutions, however neglecting to provide appropriations for their establishment. Governor Ordway objected to overburdening the Territory with such unnecessary institutions for the gratification of local interests. He recommended a single normal school at Madison.

Again, the city was asked to provide land, a quarter section in the case of Madison. The first appropriation came in 1883 and work began on the first building the following year. Classes commenced, however, in the public school building under the direction of Charles S. Richardson, the first president. The new structure on the campus was occupied in November, 1884, but the following February, it was razed by fire. Citizens of Madison immediately took steps to replace the burned building.⁸⁴

Spearfish Normal, later called Black Hills College, was the first venture in higher education in the Hills. In 1881, the legislature provided for it "for

the exclusive purpose of which shall be the instruction of persons both male and female in the art of teaching."⁸⁵ A 40-acre site was donated by the citizens of the town. After an appropriation of funds for the first building, a small two-story brick building, 30x40 feet, was completed in March of 1884. The following month, the school opened with Mr. Van B. Baker as principal and only teacher.⁸⁶

The territorial legislature not only established schools for teacher training, it also tried to improve the quality of elementary education. The decade of 1870-1880 was marked by the installation of the first course of study. From 1883 to 1891, the law required that at least 14 weeks of school be offered during the year, and that all children between the ages of 11 and 14 should attend a minimum of six consecutive weeks.⁸⁷ The qualification for the office of county superintendent was raised. In 1883, at Superintendent Beadle's request, township school districts replaced the one-school district.⁸⁸

The next decade, 1880-1890, besides providing for schools of higher learning, saw to the recodification of school laws, and to the revision of the course of study, adding to the curriculum the study of United States history, temperance, physiology and hygiene.⁸⁹ At the 14th session of the State Legislature, the lawmakers provided further: schools were permitted, by vote at the annual school meeting, to teach one hour per day of German or any other foreign language, but only one such language might be taught besides the English language; and women, after being debarred for 20 years, were again eligible to hold the office of county superintendent of schools.⁹⁰ Many German settlements took advantage of this provision for a second language. In Hoven, for example, German was taught until forbidden during World War I; French was required in the Jefferson Catholic school.

South Dakota was advancing toward a more modern way of life.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

77. *Catalogue*, 1887-1888.

78. Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

81. Boorman, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

82. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Tallent, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

83. Boorman, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

85. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

87. W. F. Kumlien, *Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota. VI. Education in Transition* (Brookings, SD, 1940), p. 22.

88. AAN, June 17, 1956.

89. *A South Dakota Guide* (WPA. Pierre, SD, 1938), p. 262.

90. Kraushaar, *op. cit.*, p. 19.